

Building green pays off

By LINDSEY MAAS

LIKE most siblings, Todd Partridge and his sister, Elizabeth Partridge Blessington, owners of Computer Transportations Services, or CTS, located in the small western Iowa town of Breda, learned many lessons from their parents. Working hard to provide the best care for the environment and always affording the best opportunities for their 30 employees are two examples.

CTS is a transportation brokerage firm started in 1979 by D.G. and Rosemary Partridge, Todd and Elizabeth's parents. In 1993, a separate business unit, CTS



TOP DRAWERS: Drawers and cabinets inside the CTS building are made of compressed sunflower seed agri-board.

ADVERTISEMENT

Monsanto Company is a member of BIO's Excellence Through StewardshipSM (ETS) Initiative.

This product has been commercialized in compliance with the ETS and Monsanto Product Launch Stewardship policies, after meeting applicable regulatory requirements in key export markets with functioning regulatory systems. Any crop or material produced from this product can only be exported to, or used, processed or sold in countries where all necessary regulatory approvals have been granted. It is a violation of national and international law to move material containing biotech traits across boundaries into nations where import is not permitted. Monsanto encourages growers to talk to their grain handler to confirm their buying position for this product. Excellence Through StewardshipSM is a service mark of Biotechnology Industry Organization. **ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW PESTICIDE LABEL DIRECTIONS.** Roundup Ready[®] crops contain genes that confer tolerance to glyphosate, the active ingredient in Roundup[®] agricultural herbicides. Roundup[®] agricultural herbicides will kill crops that are not tolerant to glyphosate. Acceleron[™], Acceleron and Design[™], Genuity[™], and Roundup Ready 2 Yield[™] are trademarks of Monsanto Technology LLC. ©2009 Monsanto Company. MSEED-9111



Key Points

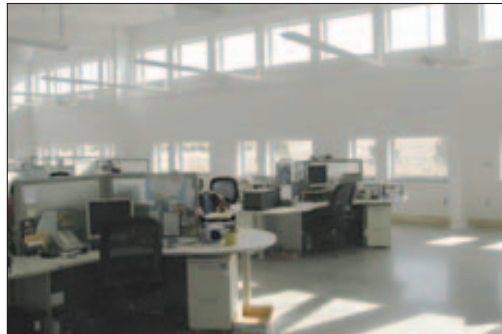
- Family uses state-of-the-art energy technology and sustainable design.
- Cabinets are compressed agri-board; paneling is 100% recycled composite.
- Land adjoining new building is seeded to native prairie grasses and wildflowers.

Air Services Inc., was created to handle smaller shipments, both domestically and internationally.

Today, the company specializes in shipping all kinds of used and refurbished equipment, including computers and other electronics, medical equipment, off-lease equipment, and telecommunications equipment.

This past year, thanks in part to more than \$160,000 in guaranteed loan and grant funds from USDA Rural Development, the Partridges lead their company through an extensive building project that used many environmentally friendly techniques and features.

"We had outgrown our current location and started looking at alternatives for expansion a few years ago," Todd explains. "Our first approach was to try and purchase and renovate an existing space on Main Street in Breda, but nothing was available."



ROOM TO WORK: The new work area is a bright and open space that has doubled the work space and quality of the workplace for CTS employees.



ENTREPRENEURS: Building a business in a small town, Todd Partridge and Elizabeth Partridge Blessington are owners of Computer Transportation Services in Breda.

Todd and Elizabeth decided to build a new space that uses state-of-the-art energy technology and sustainable design. After seeing some of his unique building projects in the Iowa City area, the Partridges decided to work with architect John Shaw, who specializes in "green" buildings, design and construction.

"John was able to design a bright and open space that almost doubled our work area with energy costs that are projected to remain the same as our current building," says Todd. "Plus, it greatly improved the quality of workplace for the employees."

Saving energy

Some of the building's features include fiberglass-clad windows as part of a ventilation system that exchanges hot and cold air appropriately depending on the outside weather. Temperatures inside the building are controlled with nine geothermal heating and cooling zones, and a sensor system raises or lowers the lights depending on the light outside.

Also, cabinets inside the building are made of compressed sunflower seed agri-board, and the steel and composite panel on the outside of



TEMPERATURE CONTROLS: With a geothermal system the temperature inside the building is controlled by nine heating and cooling zones.

building is from 100% recycled material, including milk jugs.

"USDA Rural Development's grant and guaranteed loan funds were important to us because construction costs for a building like this are quite a bit higher than a traditional structure," says Elizabeth. "Rural Development's assistance provided an additional incentive to help a small company do what is right for the environment and our employees."

The company moved into its new 8,000-square-foot building in February. Additionally, the land that adjoins the new building in downtown Breda has been seeded with native prairie grasses and wildflowers.

The Partridges plan to plant a garden at the building site to encourage healthy, homegrown meals. They are also considering using wind or solar technologies when it is time to make further enhancements to their new building.

Maas is a communications intern with USDA Rural Development in Iowa.

SECOND LIFE: The new 8,000-square-foot building features a composite panel on the outside made of 100% recycled material, including milk jugs.

Caring for environment at home

ALONG with providing a green work environment for their employees, the Partridge families also look for ways to care for the environment in their personal lives.

Todd and his family live in a renovated brick schoolhouse in nearby Auburn. The 16,000-square-foot building, which was built in 1923, is heated and cooled using a geothermal system and includes living space, a recording studio and office space.

Todd and sister Elizabeth Partridge Blessington have also helped their parents plant cedar trees, shrubs, a food plot and some prairie grasses on land purchased surrounding the Partridge family acreage north of Breda. They also removed some tiles and created a small wetland. In addition, the three families help protect the environment by driving hybrid vehicles.

Elizabeth and husband Brian also own a few acres of farmland surrounded

by a "quail" buffer strip that they lease to local organic farmers.

"A few years ago we took on an even bigger project, purchasing land near the Raccoon River outside Grant City and planted an additional 60 acres in prairie grass, shrubs, willow trees, cedar trees and additional food plots for the wildlife," says Todd.

Last summer the families worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to restore an oxbow on the property in hopes that the Topeka Shiner, a small minnow on Iowa's endangered species list, will return to the area.